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ABSTRACT

Adult education programs serve people 16 and older who have not finished high school. Individuals of limited English proficiency (LEP) generally participate in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs before enrolling in the regular adult education program. Federal law defines LEP students as having a native language or home or community language other than English. ESL teachers are most likely to be females working part time. Some have no training in teaching adults nor in teaching a second language. In some states, instruction is by trained volunteers. Instruction may be offered in the native language or English at several proficiency levels. A variety of instructional approaches are used. Language skills are taught most commonly, but other related skills may be taught. Instruction takes place in a variety of settings, but most often in public schools and community colleges. Most programs for adults are supported by federal, state, and local funds. The number of LEP adults served by ESL programs is increasing, and the trend is likely to continue. State concerns include the following: adequately trained staff, curriculum development, and appropriate student assessment. (MSE)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-7240

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FACT SHEET # 3

FL800138

ADULT EDUCATION FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT ADULTS

Adult education programs serve persons who are 16 years of age and older, out of school, and have not completed high school. Individuals of limited English proficiency generally participate in English as a second language (ESL) programs before enrolling in the regular program of adult education. These individuals range in age from 16 to 80, come from many language backgrounds, and represent various educational, social, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

WHO ARE THE STUDENTS?

The Adult Education Act (P.L. 100-297) defines an individual of limited English proficiency as:

> "An adult or out-of-school youth who has limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and (A) whose native language is a language other than English; or (B) who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language."

WHO ARE THE INSTRUCTORS?

Instructors who teach English as a second language or bilingual classes are most likely to be females working part time. Some instructors have training neither in teaching adults nor in teaching a second language. In some States, instruction is provided by trained volunteer tutors.

WHAT IS THE INSTRUCTION?

Instruction may be offered in a student's native language or exclusively in English. Adult English as a second language classes are typically divided into three levels of instruction: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. Instructional approaches used in ESL classes include: the audiolingual method, the communicative approach, the direct method, the grammar translation approach, the silent way, the natural approach, and the total physical response approach.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are the language skills usually taught in adult ESL programs. These skills are emphasized or combined to varying degrees depending on the needs of the adults being served. ESL curricula may include: General ESL, ESL Literacy, Vocational ESL, Citizenship, and Academic ESL. Many States use curriculum frameworks that integrate life skills, basic skills, vocational skills and language skills using competency based instruction. Competency based curricula integrate basic skills with life skills allowing students the flexibility to demonstrate the skills that they have learned.

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WHERE IS ESL INSTRUCTION OFFERED?

Instruction takes place in a variety of settings including adult learning centers, business and industry sites, correctional facilities, community based organizations, public schools, and community colleges. However, public schools and community colleges are the major adult education service providers.

WHAT ARE THE FUNDING SOURCES?

Most ESL programs for adults are supported by Federal, State and local funds. The Federally-funded adult education program is administered through formula grants to State educational agencies. Of the 3 million adults served in the State administered programs in 1988, more than 900,000 were enrolled in English as a second language classes.

In 1988, expenditures under the Adult Education Act exceeded $640 million. The Federal contribution equalled $134 million and State and local expenditures were estimated to be $510 million.

WHAT ARE THE STATES' CONCERNS?

The number of limited English proficient adults served by ESL programs increases each year; this trend probably will continue. According to State adult education reports, the largest numbers of individuals enrolled in ESL classes live in California, Florida, Texas, New York, and Illinois. With the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) requiring eligible legalized aliens to demonstrate knowledge of English, U.S. history, and government, States are experiencing an increased number of requests for these classes.

While State and local teachers and administrators are making progress in meeting the literacy, cultural, language, and employment needs of LEP adults, there is still much to be accomplished. Listed below, in no particular order, is a synthesis of some of the States' concerns:

more staff development and teacher training opportunities for new and experienced personnel;

detailed framework or course outline; and,

guidelines and step-by-step procedures for building reliable and valid tests and assessment measures for student placement and student achievement particularly for pre-literate and illiterate students.

REFERENCES

ESL Curriculum Guide: Materials and Methods for Teaching English as a Second Language to Adults, Karen Batt, Ellen Furstenberg and Judy Reitzers, The Free Library of Philadelphia, 1988.

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